

## The Teaching of Malay in Europe.

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It is commonly held that the best place to learn an Oriental language is in the country where it is spoken. To that facile contention Sir Charles Lyall gave an admirably considered answer in a memorandum addressed to the committee appointed in 1907 to consider the organisation of oriental studies in London. "In the first place, it is not the view which has dictated the establishment of the flourishing schools established by our commercial rivals in Germany and France. These nations have been quick to perceive the advantages of providing, in their own country, centres where persons intending to make a career for themselves in Asia may prepare themselves for their task; and, so far as Germany is concerned, it is generally admitted that they have been strikingly successful. In trade, it is found that German agents, owing to their knowledge of the languages and the habits and customs of the East gained at home, are liable to outstrip their English competitors even in our own dominions. The amount of trade which is carried on between India and the nations of continental Europe is immense and growing; and in this expansion it is scarcely open to doubt that the Germans owe much of their advantage to the training which they receive in Oriental methods in their own country. Secondly, much time is lost by persons, who defer until they land in the East the commencement of the study of Oriental subjects. Europeans require, in order to overcome the initial difficulties presented by Oriental languages, the guidance and assistance of Europeans who have already encountered and surmounted those difficulties. The genius of Oriental speech is so different from that of European languages that a student, if left to his unassisted efforts, is likely to waste both time and labour in approaching his task. Moreover, so far as my experience goes, the art of teaching is little understood in the East. The ordinary *munshi* of India, at any rate, does not understand how his pupil's intelligence should be directed or stimulated, on what points stress should be laid, how differences of idiom between the two languages should be explained and other like matters which make the difference between good teaching and bad." And then Sir Charles Lyall goes on to lay stress upon the personal influence of a European teacher as compared with a *munshi*; and again, on the value of European libraries with their stores of comparative literature. Every one of his points is corroborated by our experience in the Malay Peninsula.

Before the same committee the late Lord Cromer expressed the view that almost as important as instruction in language is instruction in "Oriental history, in religion, in all the social customs and the things that cluster round religion."

The result of the recommendations of the committee was the establishment of the School of Oriental Studies at Finsbury Circus, which was opened by His Majesty the King-Emperor in February (1917). On the faculty is a Lecturer in Malay, and Mr. C. O. Blagden, late of the Straits Settlements Civil Service, has been appointed first Lecturer.

The Report of the Committee has been published as an official blue-book and affords very profitable reading to all interested in Oriental languages. Sir Frank Swettenham is quoted as favouring preliminary training in England for six months or a year for cadets in our civil service. Sir Cecil Clementi Smith, also gave evidence, especially on the study of Chinese. Mr. Addis, joint manager of the Hongkong and Shanghai Bank gave evidence of the value of Chinese in commercial circles and the rarity of the self-denial required to master the drudgery of learning it in men once launched on business careers abroad. Mr. Ray writes a memorandum on the study of Melanesian languages.

The Report gives brief accounts of the instruction provided in Malay at Paris and Leiden.

Mr. Blagden has published the curriculum at Paris in *Journal* 50 of September 1908, and I have nothing to add to his account, except that the *Pancha-Tandaran* and *Chērita Jēnaka* are now text-books, for pupils in their first year and that 'Papers on Malay Subjects,' Skeat's 'Magic,' Wilkinson's 'Dictionary' and my own 'Malay Grammar' are books consulted. In 1906-1907 there were 24 regular students of Malay at the *École Spéciale des Langues Orientales Vivantes*.

At Leiden are taught (*a*) a general knowledge of the Indonesian languages, (*b*) Malay, (*c*) Javanese, (*d*) Old Javanese, (*e*) Sundanese, (*f*) Madurese, (*g*) Minangkabau (*h*) Batak. Synoptical lessons are given in history, religion, geography and ethnography, especially for students destined for the Dutch colonial civil service. The courses in Malay are designed for

- (i) candidates for the administrative civil service of the Dutch East Indies
- (ii) doctors of law who desire to become magistrates in the Dutch East Indies
- (iii) candidates for the degree of Doctor of Languages and Literatures of the East Indian Archipelago.

For students in groups (i) and (ii) a practical knowledge of Malay is the aim of the course; for students in (iii) a more profound comparative study of Malay and the general linguistics of the Indian Archipelago.

The School of Oriental Studies in London is designed "to give instruction in the languages of Eastern and African peoples, Ancient and Modern, and in the Literature, History, Religion and Customs of those peoples, especially with a view to the needs of persons about to proceed to the East or to Africa for the pursuit of study and research, commerce or a profession." Special inter-collegiate arrangements with the London School of Economics will be made for instruction in the sociology and anthropology of the less civilized races. Inter-collegiate arrangements will also be made for instruction in phonetics; and modern phonetic methods will be used to facilitate the acquirement of correct pronunciation.

It is to be hoped that large local commercial firms and estates will recognise the value of preliminary instruction in Malay for young men embarking on careers in the Malay Peninsula; a value fully recognised by prominent business men acquainted with colonial needs. Cadets, too, might well spend the few months they pass in England between their selection for the service and their departure for the East in attending the School. For such students elementary practical teaching is provided. I had the pleasure of reading Mr. Blagden's opening lecture and can attest its illuminating simplicity. But, it is hoped that an advanced course also may be wanted. The library, the comparative method of teaching, the lectures on Arabic and Sanskrit at the same School would all be profitable to any man, on leave in London, who might desire to perfect his knowledge of Malay linguistics, literature and history. Sanskrit and Pali and India must always be to us what Malay and Javanese and the Dutch Indies are to Holland; but it is high time that some of us at least should get to know the best that is written about things Malayan, to recognise that there is a best, a standard of scholarship, in Malay studies. For those, who have that ambition, I can say confidently that a course of the lectures provided will dispel the hallowed notion that the highest authority on Malay matters is a *kampong* elder.